

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1985

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 HALIFAX 0019

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SUBJECT: THE ATLANTIC FISHERIES: GUNG HO VERSUS
GO SLOW

REF: 77 HALIFAX 0589

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE LONG-AWAITED SCHEME OF NOVA SCOTIA
AND NFLD FOR THE 10-YEAR REBUILDING OF THE FISHING
FLEET AT A COST OF DOLS 900 MILLION HAS FINALLY BEEN
MADE PUBLIC. ALTHOUGH NOT PARTICULARLY WELL WRITTEN,
IT IS NONETHELESS A GOOD REFLECTION OF THE ACTIVIST
PHILOSOPHY OF THE FISHERY MINISTERS OF ATLANTIC CANADA.
THEIR ACTIVISM IS IN MARKED CONTRAST WITH THE MORE
MEASURED AND DELIBERATE PACE OF THE FEDERAL FISHERY
MINISTER, ROMEO LEBLANC. PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY
ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FEDERAL MINISTER AND
HIS PROVINCIAL COUNTERPARTS IN CANADA S EACH COAST
FISHERY. THE PROVINCIAL MINISTERS FAVOR INTIMATE,
SHORT- TO MEDIUM-TERM JOINT ARRANGEMENTS WITH FOREIGN
FISHING INTERESTS, AS WELL AS ALLOWING FOREIGN
INTERESTS TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL FISH PROCESSING
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COMPANIES. OVER THE LONGER TERM, HOWEVER, THE
PROVINCIAL MINISTERS WOULD PHASE OUT ALL FOREIGN
FISHING EFFORT WITHIN THE 200-MILE ZONE. LEBLANC
FAVORS A DIFFERENT POLICY FOR FOREIGNERS. HE SUPPORTS
A POLICY ALLOWING FOREIGNERS SOME CONTINUING ROLE AS
FISHERMEN WITHIN THE 200-MILE ZONE BUT WHICH AVOIDS
SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM JOINT ARRANGEMENTS. END

SUMMARY.

1. "...THE ELEPHANT HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A MOUSE."
THIS QUOTATION COMES FROM A PRESS ARTICLE ANALYZING
THE MUCH-TOUTED SCHEME OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS
OF NOVA SCOTIA AND NEWFOUNDLAND TO REPLACE EXISTING
FISHING VESSELS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS AT A COST EXCEEDING
DOLS 900 MILLION. IT WAS A SCHEME WHICH WAS PUT
TOGETHER IN CONSIDERABLE SECRECY (BUT WITH PLENTY OF
OFFSTAGE HOOPLA) BY THE FISHERIES DEPARTMENTS OF THE
TWO PROVINCES AND WHICH WAS SOMEWHAT UNENTHUSIASTICALLY
ACCEPTED BY THE FISHERIES MINISTERS OF NEW BRUNSWICK
AND PEI BEFORE IT WAS FINALLY DUMPED ON THE DESK OF
FEDERAL FISHERIES MINISTER ROMEO LEBLANC.

2. THE 22-PAGE DOCUMENT IS SOMETHING LESS THAN A
PROSE POEM. RICHARD CASHIN, PRESIDENT OF THE NFLD
FISHERMEN, FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION, CALLED IT
"THE MOST PEDESTRIAN DOCUMENT I HAVE EVER SEEN...
AN EMBARRASSMENT TO NEWFOUNDLAND...AND I DIDN T
REALIZE HOW BAD THE PROBLEM WAS IN NOVA SCOTIA TILL
I SAW IT..." BUT PROSE STYLE ASIDE, THE PAPER IS
IN ESSENCE AN ACCURATE AND REVEALING STATEMENT OF THE
PROVINCIAL VIEWPOINT, REFLECTING BOTH OPTIMISM AND
CONCERN ABOUT THE REJUVENATION OF THE ATLANTIC
FISHERIES, EXPRESSING FEARS ABOUT CANADA S FAILING
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TO OPTIMIZE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED
FROM HER MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF THE 200-MILE ZONE,
URGING EARLY ACTION TO SECURE NEW MARKETS ABROAD FOR
FISHERY PRODUCTS, AND SUGGESTING JOINT "ARRANGEMENTS"
WITH FOREIGN FISHING COUNTRIES. THE HEART OF THE PAPER,
OF COURSE, IS THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THERE BE A
FISHING FLEET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COSTING DOLS 900
MILLION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

3. IT IS, IN SHORT, A FULL-STEAM-AHEAD, GUNG HO,
ACTIVIST SET OF PROPOSALS WHICH SEEM TO PRESUPPOSE
THE REBUILDING OF FISH STOCKS AT FASTER RATES THAN
THOSE PREDICTED BY THE FEDERAL FISHERIES DEPARTMENT.
IT IS ALSO A SET OF PROPOSALS WHICH ASSUME THAT
FOREIGN FISHING INTERESTS WILL WORK ALONGSIDE AND
TRAIN CANADIANS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE CANADIANS, IN
NEW BOATS AND WITH NEW SKILLS, SEND THE ALIEN FLEETS
BACK TO THEIR DISTANT HOMELANDS. IN THE MEANTIME,

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THE FOREIGNERS ARE EXPECTED TO ACCEPT MEEKLY WHATEVER
CRUMBS MAY FALL TO THEM FROM THE CANADIAN TABLE.

4. LEBLANC WILL PROBABLY MAKE SOME SORT OF FORMAL
RESPONSE TO THE PROVINCIAL PROPOSALS SOMETIME LATER
THIS MONTH. JUDGING FROM WHAT HE AND HIS DEPART-
MENTAL COLLEAGUES HAVE ALREADY SAID ABOUT THE PLAN,
HOWEVER, IT IS APPARENT THAT HE WAS NOT ENCHANTED
BY IT. THAT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, PARTICULARLY IN THE
LIGHT OF LEBLANC'S WELL-KNOWN BELIEF THAT THE EAST
COAST FISHERY MUST BE REJUVENATED IN A PHASED, ONE-
STEP-AT-A-TIME MANNER. HE WANTS A SLOW BUT STEADY
APPROACH TO THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES WITH REGENERATION
OF THE FISH STOCKS AS THE FIRST PRIORITY. IN HIS VIEW,
FLEET REPLACEMENT CAN COME AT A LATER DATE AND MUCH
LESS DRAMATICALLY THAN IS SUGGESTED BY THE MUCH
PUBLICIZED DOLS 900 MILLION PROGRAM. AMONG THE IMPORT-
ANT BUT DRAMATIC PROGRAMS HE HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED
TO IMPROVE THE FISHING INDUSTRY ARE PROGRAMS FOR
IMPROVING THE HANDLING OF THE CATCHES OF INSHORE
FISHERMEN AND FOR THE FURNISHING OF ICE-MAKING PLANTS
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IN FISHING COMMUNITIES NOW LACKING THAT FACILITY.
THESE ARE PROGRAMS WHICH MAKE LITTLE SPLASH BUT WHICH
GO A LONG WAY TOWARD ASSURING THE FISHERMAN BETTER

PRICES FOR HIS CATCH.

5. NOWHERE ARE THE DIFFERING VIEWS OF ROMEO LEBLANC AND HIS PROVINCIAL COUNTERPARTS MORE APPARENT THAN IN THE MATTER OF FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN THE FISHERY. THE PROVINCIAL MINISTERS FAVOR SHORT- TO MEDIUM-TERM "ARRANGEMENTS" WITH THE FOREIGN FISHING INTERESTS, INCLUDING JOINT CREWING OF VESSELS, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS CANADA HAS THE VESSELS AND EXPERTISE IN FISHING FOR AND PROCESSING NON-TRADITIONAL SPECIES. A "SCHEDULE OF CANADIANIZATION" IS CONTEMPLATED WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THE GRADUAL PHASING-OUT OF FOREIGN FISHING EFFORT. LEBLANC, HOWEVER, IS LEERY OF TOO INTIMATE AN ASSOCIATION WITH FOREIGN FISHERMEN DURING THESE YEARS OF THE REGENERATION OF THE FISH STOCKS. HE SEES JOINT FISHING ARRANGEMENTS WITH FOREIGNERS AS SOMETHING AKIN TO ALLOWING THE NOSE OF THE CAMEL UNDER THE TENT ON A COLD NIGHT. IN THE END, IS THE CAMEL MORE LIKELY TO WITHDRAW THE NOSE OR TO MOVE INTO THE TENT THE REST OF THE WAY?

6. BUT LEBLANC IS NEVERTHELESS OPEN-MINDED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ALLOWING THE FOREIGNERS A CONTINUING ROLE WITHIN THE 200-MILE ZONE. EXCLUDING THEM ALTOGETHER, HE REASONS, WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO COOPERATE WITH CANADA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF FISH STOCKS OUTSIDE THE 200-MILE ZONE. MOREOVER, SUCH A POLICY MIGHT WELL LEAD FOREIGN NATIONS TO RETALIATE BY CLOSING THEIR MARKETS TO CANADIAN FISH.

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7. TO WALTER CARTER, NFLD S FISHERY MINISTER, LEBLANC S REASONING ABOUT A CONTINUING FOREIGN PRESENCE IN THE OFFSHORE FISHERY IS SPECIOUS. CARTER MAINTAINS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS TRADING OFF THE EAST COAST FISHERY TO PRESERVE EXPORT MARKETS FOR THE PRODUCTS OF CENTRAL CANADA. LEBLANC, A FRANCOPHONE ACADIAN, BUT WITH AN EASY COMMAND OF ENGLISH, TERMED CARTER S ALLEGATION "UNADULTERATED CRAP". MAYBE SO, BUT STILL, CARTER S ALLEGATION AND LEBLANC S RIPOSTE ARE INDICATIVE OF THE ADVERSARY POSITIONS THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL FISHERY MINISTERS ALMOST AUTOMATICALLY TAKE VIS-A VIS EACH OTHER.

8. THE MOST NOTEWORTHY CURRENT FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL DISAGREEMENT OVER FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT IN THE CANADIAN FISHING INDUSTRY HAS COME ABOUT THROUGH THE ATTEMPT OF A GERMAN SUBSIDIARY OF UNILEVER, NAMED NORDSEE, TO

PURCHASE CONTROLLING INTEREST OF THE OCEAN HARVEST

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FISH PROCESSING PLANT AT HARBOUR GRACE, NFLD.
CARTER AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT STRONGLY FAVOR
NORDSEE S PROPOSAL AND ARE EAGERLY AWAITING WHAT THEY
HOPE WILL BE FIRA S APPROVAL. FIRA, HOWEVER, IS ONLY
THE FIRST HURDLE NORDSEE MUST GET OVER. THE GERMAN
COMPANY'S OFFER IS CONDITIONAL UPON ALSO BEING
GRANTED PERMISSION TO OPERATE OFFSHORE TRAWLERS TO
KEEP THE FISH PLANT SUPPLIED, AND THESE TRAWLERS
WOULD HAVE TO BE LICENSED BY MR LEBLANC. WILL
LEBLANC GRANT THE LICENSES? HE HASN T YET SAID.
PERHAPS HE IS HOPING THAT FIRA WILL DISAPPROVE THE
TAKEOVER AND MAKE THE ISSUE MOOT. BUT IF HE S
FORCED TO MAKE THE DECISION HIMSELF, IT S PRETTY
CLEAR WHAT IT WILL PROBABLY BE. NORDSEE, AFTER ALL,
MAY ONLY BE A SMALL NOSE BUT UNILEVER IS A BIG CAMEL
AMIDST A WHOLE HERD OF OTHERS.

9. DRAFTER: JHMOORE
MOORE

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